



Are Junior Doing This

Lots of fun out behind the shed, but some mothers might be nervous could they see their Percies or Harolds perform on a ladder as an improvised bar. There is far less danger to life and limb on the properly cared for community playground.

Looks nice and makes a good picture. Yet would you permit your girl or boy to do this several miles from home? For how many such places are within reach of the average family living in the country town?

Above—Maybe some country towns have small lakes near by, or mill ponds. Granted. Could you as a parent wish your sons to use them for sailing? Would they be permitted to do as the lads shown here are doing?

Helping to Oust the Devil From the Small Town

By UTHAI VINCENT WILCOX

IT SEEMS like carrying coal to Newcastle to suggest that the children of the country towns need playgrounds in which to develop. "Why," says the heavy taxpayer, as he gasps his astonishment, "the town is so small, there's the creek right over there, and a lake over yonder, and there's the hills with canyons—why, why, when I was a boy—"

But that's just the trouble; Mr. Heavy Taxpayer and Mr. Conservative Citizen think in the terms of several decades ago when things perhaps were different. Still, in all reasonableness, there would be fewer criminals had there been places to play for the boys and girls of ten and fifteen years ago.

A frowzy-haired chap was indignantly expressing himself to a group of boys about him:

"Where we goin' to play? Mrs. Jones is afraid we'll hurt her hedge if the ball goes into it, and Old Man Dickson says we gotta' keep off his lawn, and you know what happens when we try to play on that empty lot over there by Castle's."

"It sure makes me sick!" answered one of them and by way of emphasizing that alleged sickness he threw down the ball hard enough to dent the hard-baked soil.

The rest of them hung about, pushing and jostling, expressing their indignation in one way and another until one of them spoke up:

"Aw, let's go over to Spud's shed, I'll show you somethin' that Speck gave me—some pictures!" And the accompanying wink indicated the kind of pictures expected.

The group of live, active boys averaging about twelve years of age left for the questionable indoor amusement of looking at certain pictures "given them."

And this was in a town of about 3,000. Yet many of the best fathers and mothers, teachers and Sunday school leaders would have been much surprised had it been suggested to them that their small city needed a regular playground. Because the town is small, and there are vacant fields within several blocks, even public-spirited citizens seem to feel that the boys and girls have everything

needful properly to develop their physical and social natures.

Even casual investigations prove that as far as physical recreation is concerned the city brother and sister have access to certain advantages unknown to the country lad. There are the Y. M. C. A.'s, and the Y. W. C. A.'s, and municipal playgrounds, baths, sometimes improved beaches, always parks and certain playground supervision.

The small-town youth is fortunate (for it is indeed quite rare) to find a public school with adequate playgrounds worthy the name. Often the short recess periods must be spent in crowded quarters or on the streets adjoining. Check up this statement with the small cities that you know about.

Even "the wide country in which to roam" is not easy of access for the suburban child though it may surround his village. There are orchards, or grain planted, or pastures for stock, or estates laid out. The roaming will make trespassers of the roamers; even if this were not true the majority of children need more than mere hiking and tramping.

The Psalmist of old sung of the cattle on a thousand hills that belonged to the Lord, but by the works of man it seems that even in the village the boys and girls in their innocent search for joy and pleasure have fallen into the hand of the devil and his angels for they are controlled by most undesirable circumstances and unhealthy conditions.

Some small towns have endeavored to remedy this by providing places in which the children may play such games as baseball, football, tennis and the running games. Nor has this always been done by municipal authorities; more often by private interests who appreciate the trend of the times.

In Mountain View, California, a town of less than five thousand, a large publishing institution purchased two acres of ground and laid out a baseball diamond with back stop and bleachers. This is used not only by the employees of the institution but by the boys and girls of the neigh-

borhood who have really needed some place where they can play during the afternoons. The way they have flocked to this open ground seems to have proved without much doubt the need that has existed.

On a recent Hallowe'en the local school board held a lantern parade and bonfire there for the benefit of the boys and girls. Those who desired to dress the parts so dear to children were given the chance to swoop about in their witches costumes, broomstick steeds, and pumpkin lanterns.

Certain games were planned that brought into active participation all of the children from the youngest to the oldest. With supervision by fathers who were still "older boys" something was doing every minute. The evening's outdoor fun concluded with the ascension of a balloon that had been made by some of the men who remembered the way they used to make them, aided and abetted by some of the "kids."

Of course the balloon, fitted with an oil-soaked string, turned turtle when the hot air had cooled, the string caused it to ignite and there was a bright spot in the heavens for an instant. The boys and girls and the parents too that were present all pronounced it "great" with a chorus of long-drawn-out "A-a-a-h-h-h's."

After the balloon had fallen in a trail of light against the night sky all were invited to the assembly hall of the publishing house where four reels of motion pictures were shown. There was, of course, no charge made for admittance, and all who could find places were welcomed. The favorite places were reserved for the children; parents and adults were asked to take the back seats. It was to be strictly a "kids' night." Some of the older folks remarked that "they had never seen so many boys and girls in the town before," and wondered where they all came from.

Every reel was appreciated, and when at about 10 o'clock the "Good Night" slide was thrown on the screen, boys and girls went home and to bed, tired from physical play, but with the sauce of mental food for a dessert.

It was noticeable that gates, doors, wagons,